



Office of Economic Development
City of Seattle

Briefing Memo

Date: February 26, 2010

To: Councilmember Richard Conlin
Councilmember Mike O'Brien
Councilmember Jean Godden
Councilmember Tim Burgess

CC: Phyllis Shulman, Legislative Assistant

From: Steve Johnson, Acting Director, OED
Brian Surratt, Business Development Director, OED

Re: Neighborhood Business District Program

This briefing memo provides background information for our upcoming Regional Development and Sustainability Committee briefing scheduled for March 2nd, to discuss the Neighborhood Business District Program.

Background

OED's Neighborhood Business District Program is designed to foster vibrant neighborhood business districts that:

- Allow small businesses to grow and flourish, making a positive contribution to the city's economic health, and
- Reflect the unique character of the neighborhoods where they are located and contribute to their vitality.

OED's programs are based on proven methodologies, such as Main Street, that business districts benefit most from comprehensive approaches that work simultaneously to accomplish the following:

- The retail and pedestrian environment is clean, safe, attractive and easily accessible.
- Catalyst real estate projects replace vacant or underutilized spaces with new developments that generate a sense of momentum and project a positive image of the district.
- Neighborhood organizations, residents, property owners and business owners collaborate to ensure that efforts to strengthen the district will continue over the long-term.
- Businesses prosper because they are receiving the technical assistance and support they need to attract customers and adapt to changing neighborhood demographics. New businesses move into the district that complement and improve the business mix.
- The district has a positive, consistent image that helps draw more customers to visit it.

OED's supports these objectives through the following activities:

- Funding for Neighborhood Business District projects through an annual Request for Proposals (RFP).
- Provide technical assistance to help neighborhoods form and maintain Business Improvement Areas.
- Provide support to Neighborhood Farmers Markets.
- Publish the Create a Thriving Business District guide, a publication that highlights tools and resources for improving Seattle business districts.
- Funding for multi-year revitalization strategies in targeted low-income neighborhood business districts.
- Provide technical assistance and access to capital for businesses operating in neighborhoods.

This year, OED's Neighborhood Business District RFP is soliciting proposals from organizations interested in participating in a collaborative city-wide buy local marketing program and/or completing other projects that benefit a Seattle neighborhood business district. Additionally, OED is soliciting qualifications from individuals or organizations to develop and implement the buy-local marketing program. Drafts of the 2010 RFP and RFQ are attached.

OED also supports current and forming Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) within the City of Seattle. BIAs provide an annual budget to fund services and improvements in neighborhood business districts by assessing property and/or business owners who benefit from the improvements. BIA funds can be used for services such as parking, joint marketing, cleanup and maintenance, security, special events, beautification, and professional management. The City contracts with each BIA, and each BIA is governed by a ratepayer's advisory board. The City collects the assessments and reimburses BIA expenses.

Current neighborhoods with BIAs are Broadway, Chinatown/International District, Columbia City, Downtown, Pioneer Square, University District, and West Seattle. In 2007 OED facilitated the formation of the Columbia City BIA, the first new BIA in Seattle since 1999. OED also developed proposals for the Lake City BIA and Jackson Street BIA. In 2010, the expected outcomes of the City's BIA program include:

- Begin BIA formation processes in the upper Queen Anne and Greenwood-Phinney commercial districts.
- Achieve the necessary threshold of support and submit legislation to Council creating the Lake City and Jackson Street BIAs by September 2010.
- Analyze and possibly revise the assessments and boundaries of the Chinatown International District and West Seattle BIAs.

Farmers Markets in our neighborhood business districts provide fresh fruit and produce as well as a community gathering place. Markets increase the foot traffic of a business district which results in higher sales for local stores. Recently local Farmers Markets were losing their long term market locations within neighborhood business districts due to redevelopment of private property. OED lead legislation in 2009 to streamline permitting of Farmers Markets

on public property within the business districts. Currently, OED provides site location and permitting assistance to Farmers Markets throughout Seattle.

In selected neighborhood business districts, we provide funding to develop and implement multi-year comprehensive commercial district revitalization plans for the district. Our approach has two cornerstones: a lead agency and a multi-year work-plan. The lead agency is a neighborhood-based organization that is selected to steward commercial district revitalization efforts directly and by building partnerships and collaborations with others. Business Districts with multi-year strategies include the International District, 12th Avenue, Jackson Street, MLK/Othello, White Center and North Rainier.

Attachments

2010 Neighborhood Business District Program RFP
2010 Buy Local Marketing Consultant RFQ